

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

PC-01 SCCT-01 OPR-02 COME-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 FMC-01

CG-00 OFA-01 DLOS-03 TRSE-00 IO-10 INT-05 FEA-01

OES-03 EUR-12 CU-02 /109 W

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R 112142Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3065

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CO

SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THIS WEEK MARKED THE 27TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASSASSINATION OF COLOMBIAN POPULIST LEADER JORGE ELIECER GAITAN, WHICH DETONATED THE BOGOTAZO, GAVE RISE TO THE VIOLENCIA, WHICH IN TURN PRODUCED THE ROJAS PINILLA DICTATORSHIP AND 16 YEARS OF NATIONAL FRONT GOVERNMENTS. THE OCCASION, MARKED BY A FEW SMALL, LOW-KEY COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONIES CONDUCTED BY LEFT LIBERALS AND ANAPISTAS, SERVED AS A BACKGROUND FOR CONTINUED PUBLIC CONCERN OVER SECURITY, CAUSED BY A RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL OF GUERRILLA ACTIVITY AND SPECTACULAR, HIGHLY PUBLICIZED CRIME. PRESIDENT LOPEZ HAS SO FAR RESISTED INSISTENT PRESSURE, LARGEMLY FROM THE SECURITY FORCES, TO PROCLAIM A STATE OF SEIGE. MEANWHILE, AUTHORITIES ANNOUNCED THE MILITARIZATION OF COLOMBIA'S PORTS TO COUNTER-ACT MASSIVE AND UNCONTROLLED THEFT. PRESIDENT LOPEZ ADDRESSED AN EXTROARDINARY APPEAL TO LIBERAL REPRESENTATIVES IN THE CHAMBER TO OBEY PARTY DISCIPLINE AND PASS CONFIDENTIAL

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INTACT HIS COMPTROLLER GENERAL REFORM BILL, AN INDICATION

OF THE LACK OF AUTHORITY AND LEADERSHIP WHICH CHARACTERIZE HIS RELATIONS WITH THE CONGRESS AND THE LIBERAL PARTY. FONMIN LIEVANO'S MTG WITH THE SECRETARY RECEIVED PROMINENT AND FAVORABLE, IF VAGUE, COVERAGE IN THE COLOMBIAN PRESS. END SUMMARY.

2. PUBLIC SECURITY. OVERSHADOWING SEVERAL SCATTERED RURAL KIDNAPPINGS ATTRIBUTED TO GUERILLAS, A FAROC GROUP ESTIMATED AT 150 ATTACHED AND CAPTURED THE ISOLATED TOWN OF PUERTO RICO CAQUETA DEPARTMENT. THE ATTACKING GROUP WAS THE LARGEST IN RECENT MEMORY. SECURITY SOURCES TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT THE GROUP WAS WELL ARMED, EQUIPPED WITH RADIOS, AND THAT THE ATTACK REPRESENTED A SORT OF GRADUATION PRACTICAL EXERCISE FOR YOUNG GUERILLA RECRUTS WHO HAD JUST COMPLETED A PERIOD OF TRAINING. TWO MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL POLICE DETACHMENT WERE KILLED BUT THE SURVIVORS, FORTED UP IN THE POLICE BARRACKS, PREVENTED THE GUERILLAS FROM CAPTURING POLICE WEAPONS STORED THERE UNTIL THE APPROACH OF RELIEF ELEMENTS FORCED THE GUERILLAS TO WITHDRAW.

3. IN ANOTHER OF A SERIES OF SPECTACULAR AND HIGHLY PUBLICIZED CRIMES IN BOGOTA, A PROMINENT JEWELER WAS MURDERED ON A HEAVILY TRAVELED CITY STREET DURING THE EVENING RUSH HOUR WHILE ON HIS WAY HOME. IT WAS NOT CLEAR FROM CONFLICTING EYEWITNESS REPORTS WHETHER IT WAS A KIDNAPPING ATTEMPT THAT MISFIRED, OR SIMPLE MURDER.

4. EMBASSY SOURCES REPORT INTENSIVE PRESSURE BY THE ARMY AND POLICE ON PRESIDENT LOPEZ TO PROCLAIM A STATE OF SIEGE, IN ORDER TO CURTAIL WHAT THEY SEE AS AN INCREASE IN THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE. LOPEZ WILL CONTINUE TO RESIST THIS PRESSURE WHILE HE CAN, BUT IT WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO DO SO IF VIOLENCE CONTINUES AND PUBLIC CONCERN INCREASES (BOGOTA 3097).

5. MILITARIZATION OF THE PORTS. ON APRIL 8 THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CUSTOMS ANNOUNCED THE MILITARIZATION OF ALL PORTS, IN REACTION TO MOUNTING PROTESTS ABOUT INSECURITY. THE MOVE CAME FOLLOWING CONSIDERABLE PRESS ATTENTION TO DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS IN THE PORTS. IN JAN THREE SHIPPING ASSOCIATIONS HAD PLACED A \$1 A TON "INSECURITY SURCHARGE"--THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND IN SOUTH AMERICA ON ALL CONFIDENTIAL

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CARGO MOVED THROUGH BUENAVENTURA. THE GOC ALSO ANNOUNCED AN ACROSS-THE-BOARD PORT REFORM PROGRAM WHICH SIMPLIFIED CUSTOMS PROCEDURES, EXAMINATIONS AND LICENSES FOR CUSTOMS AGENTS, COMPUTERIZATION OF RECORDS, AND DECENTRALIZATION OF CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION. THE ADMITTANCE AND CLEARANCE OF CARGO WILL STILL BE DONE BY CUSTOMS, WITH THE ARMY USED FOR SECURITY FOR THE TIME BEING.

6. SHIPPING ASSOCIATIONS CONTACTED BY THE EMBASSY APPLAUDED

THE MOVE, WHICH THEY HAD URGED FOR OVER A YEAR, AND NOW

FORESEE A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN PORT SECURITY.

THEY EXPECT THAT THE ARMY'S PRESENCE WILL BE TRANSITORY,
PENDING THE CREATION OF A U.S-STYLE COAST GUARD.

7. LIBERAL PARTY DISCIPLINE INVOKED TO RESOLVE

COMPTROLLER REFORM BILL CONTROVERSY. THE CONGRESSIONAL
WEEK WAS DEVOTED TO MANEUVERING AMONG THE VARIOUS LIBERAL
PARTY Factions TO FIND A FORMULA FOR GETTING THE CHAMBER
OF REPRESENTATIVES TO RECONSIDER AN ARTICLE IT DELETED
FROM THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL REFORM BILL PASSED LAST WEEK
(BOGOTA 3095) WHICH WOULD EMPOWER THE PRESIDENT TO INITIATE
INTERNAL REORGANIZATION OF THE OFFICE, INCLUDING THE
ESTABLISHING OF A CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM. THE SENATE,
EARLY IN THE WEEK, PASSED THE BILL, REINCORPORATING THE CONTRO-
VERSIAL PATRONAGE SECTION. PRESIDENT LOPEZ THEN SENT A LETTER
TO CHAMBER PRESIDENT LUYZVILLAR BORDA PLEADING FOR AUTHORITY
TO MAKE THE CHANGES HE FELT NECESSARY IN THE OFFICE.

AFTER A PROLONGED DEBATE IN THE COMMISSION

APRIL 10, THE BILL WAS APPROVED AND SENT TO THE
CHAMBER, WHICH IS LIKELY TO APPROVE THE BILL NEXT WEEK.
LIBERAL PARTY REPRESENTATIVES TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT THE
CHAMBERS EARLIER REJECTION OF THE ARTICLE WAS DUE TO THE
LACK OF LEADERSHIP IN LIBERAL PARTY RANKS. PRESIDENT LOPEZ
HAS REPEATEDLY DECLINED TO ENGAGE IN PARTY AFFAIRS, AND
CHAMBER PRESIDENT VILLAR, THEY SAY, IS SO BUSY WITH PARTY
MATTERS OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER THAT DRIFT AND CONTROVERSY
HAS RESULTED WITHIN THEIR RANKS. WHILE NOT
IMPORTANT IN ITSELF, THE FLAP OVER THE COMPTROLLER
GENERAL REFORM BILL IS ONE MORE INDICATION OF THE LIBERAL
PARTY'S DIFFICULTY IN MAINTAINING ITS UNITY.

8. PRESS REACTIONS TO LIEVANO VISIT TO U.S. PRESS

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COVERAGE OF FONMIN LIEVANO'S TRIP TO WASHINGTON WAS FAVOR-
ABLE (BOGOTA 3299). EL TIEMPO CALLED THE MTG BETWEEN
LIEVANO AND SECRETARY KISSINGER "SUPREMELY FRIENDLY"
AND THE EDITORIALS THAT HAVE APPEARED SO FAR DESCRIBED THE
VISIT AS BEING BENEFICIAL TO HEMISPHERIC RELATIONS. FRONT
PAGE ARTICLES REPORTED THAT LIEVANO DELIVERED THE PANAMA
CANAL LETTER SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENTS OF COLOMBIA, VENEZUELA,
AND COSTA RICA, AND , WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAIL, LISTED
THE POINTS OF DISCUSSION AS OAS MATTERS, INCLUDING SANCTIONS
AGAINST CUBA, PRESIDENT LOPEZ'S FORTHCOMING VISIT TO THE
U.S. GENERAL HEMISPHERIC RELATIONS AND BILATERAL ISSUES.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 3340/2

9. PETROLEUM PRICE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY. AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY AND INACTION, PROSPECTS FOR RESOLUTUION OF PRICE AND PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS IN THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY HAVE IMPROVED DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS. APPARENTLY ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRESIDENT LOPEZ, THE MINISTER OF MINES NAMED AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ASSIST ECOPETROL IN NEGOTIATING NEW PRICE STRUCTURES AND INCREASED STATE PARTICIPATION IN THE INDUSTRY. THIS MOVE PLACES NEGOTIATING RESPONSIBILITY CLEARLY WITH ECOPETROL. OFFICIALS OF THIS STATE-OWNED COMPANY AND THE NEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE ARE REGARDED AS BEING NOT ONLY ANXIOUS TO PROCEED RAPIDLY IN RESOLVING PRESENT PROBLEMS BUT ALSO PRAGMATIC IN THEIR CONCEPT OF NEW FORMULAS ACCEPTABLE TO THE COMPANIES. ONE MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, FORMER MINISTER OF MINES JUAN JOSE TURBAY, SUBSEQUENTLY ISSUED A STATEMENT CONCERNING THE PRESENT PETROLEUM SITUATION AND PROSPECTS, WHICH WAS PROBABLY THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE AND REALISTIC THAT HAS BEEN OFFERED BY A PUBLIC OFFICIAL IN THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS. PRIVATE COMPANY OFFICIALS, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT NEGOTIATIONS

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WILL BE DIFFICULT AND SUBJECT TO SOME POLITICAL CONSIDERATION, ARE ENCOURAGED OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATING PRICES FOR PRESENT, INCREMENTAL, AND NEW PRODUCTION WHICH COULD OFFER SUFFICIENT INCENTIVE TO INCREASE SOMEWHAT PRESENT PRODUCTION AND UNDERTAKE GREATER EXPLORATION. ECOPETROL AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE OFFICIALS HAVE EMPHASIZED IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS, HOWEVER, THAT ANY NEW AGREEMENTS WILL SERVE TO AMELIORATE BUT NOT RESOLVE THE PETROLEUM SHORTAGE OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS.

10. TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER. ADDRESSING THE THIRD PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE LATIN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATIONS, MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RAMIREZ OCAMPO SAID THE GOC WILL ATTEMPT TO DIVIDE UP TECHNOLOGY PACKAGES TO DETERMINE WHAT REALLY HAS TO BE IMPORTED AND WHAT IS AVAILABLE WITHIN COLOMBIA. HE SAID COLOMBIA IS DETERMINED TO DO THIS EVEN WHEN TURN-KEY CONTRACTS OR TIED FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS ARE OBSTACLES TO THE ASSIMILATION OF TECHNOLOGY. ONE ANSWER TO TECHNOLOGY CONTROL BY MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS, HE SUGGESTED, IS TO FORM LATIN AMERICAN MULTINATIONALCONSULTING GROUPS. HE ALSO ENDORSED THE IDEA OF A TECHNOLOGY BANK. WHEN FOREIGN CONSULTANTS MUST BE USED, THEY WILL BE REQUIRED TO ASSOCIATE WITH A COLOMBIAN FIRM OR AT THE VERY LEAST TO INCLUDE COLOMBIAN TECHNICIANS IN THEIR OPERATION, SO THAT TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER CAN TAKE PLACE.

11. TEAR-GAS STOPS CONCERT BY EXILED RUSSIAN ARTIST. A CONCERT BY EXILED RUSSIAN CELLIST MATISLAV ROSTROPOVICH SCHEDULED FOR THE EVENING OF APRIL 4 AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN BOGOTA WAS CANCELLED AT THE LAST MOMENT WHEN TWO TEAR-GAS BOMBS EXPLODED IN THE CROWDED AUDITORIUM. NEWSPAPERS REPORTED THAT BOTH MOSCOW AND PEKING-ORIENTED LEFTIST GROUPS HAD PROTESTED THE MUSICIANS APPEARANCE AND WERE THE AUTHORS OF THE BOMBING. HOWEVER, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE COLOMBIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (MOSCOW) HURRIEDLY DENIED ANY INVOLVEMENT. THE MARXIST RECTOR OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, LUIS CARLOS PEREZ, TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT ALTHOUGH THE IDENTIFY OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE WAS NOT KNOWN, THEY CERTAINLY CONSTITUTED A SMALL UNREPRESENTATIVE EXTREMIST MINORITY. PEREZ SAID THAT A FULL INVESTIGATION WOULD BE CARRIED OUT BY THE UNIVERSITY. NO INJURIES

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WERE REPORTED AMONG THE PREDOMINANTLY UNIVERSITY STUDENT AUDIENCE AND DAMAGE TO THE AUDITORIUM WAS SLIGHT. THE BOMBING PRODUCED WIDESPREAD DENUNCIACTION IN THE PRESS.

12 PRE-COLOMBIAN ART EXHIBIT A SUCCESS. ON APRIL 8, THE

CENTRO COLOMBO-AMERICANO OF BOGOTA INAUGURATED A MAJOR EXHIBIT OF PRE-COLOMBIAN ART SELECTED FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION. THIS FIRST PUBLIC SHOWING OF THESE ARTIFACTS FROM THE MOST IMPORTANT COLLECTION IN COLOMBIA HAS CREATED A CONSIDERABLE STIR IN BOGOTA CULTURAL MILIEU AS REFLECTED IN THE ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION GIVEN IT IN ALL OF THE MEDIA. THE MORE THAN SEVEN HUNDRED GUESTS WHO CROWDED THE EXHIBIT HALL ON OPENING NIGHT AND THE HUNDREDS THAT HAVE BEEN COMING DAILY ATTEST TO THE WIDE INTEREST THE SPECTACULAR EXHIBIT HAS AWAKENED.
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